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## The Word פָּרֶשׁ in the Old Testament

WILLIAM R. ARNOLD

ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ACCORDING to the prevalent view, there are two Hebrew nouns פָּרֶשׁ: one meaning *horse*, of the form קָטָל, the plural of which should, according to rule, be פָּרָשִׁים; the other meaning *horseman*, of the form קָטָל, plural פָּרָשִׁים. The traditional vocalization of the plural is, however, uniformly פָּרָשִׁים; in other words, it knows only one word פָּרֶשׁ, and that with constant *a* in the first syllable. Partly on this ground, doubtless, Schwally<sup>1</sup> has questioned that פָּרֶשׁ ever has the meaning *horse* in Hebrew, casting doubt upon the integrity of the text of such Old Testament passages as have been held to establish that fact.

The true state of the case would seem to be exactly the opposite of that assumed by Schwally. There is only one word פָּרֶשׁ in Hebrew, but the meaning is properly *horse*, not *horseman*.

It is customary to adduce in support of the conventional view the two Arabic words فَרَس *horse* and فَارِس *horseman*. فَارِس, however, is of course not a participial formation from a verb فرس *to ride*, but, on the contrary, (like Hebrew בֹּקֵר from בָּקַר) denominative from فَרَس. Nor can there be any talk of coördinate formations of the types קָטָל and קָטָל coinciding in the Hebrew in the singular פָּרֶשׁ, for there is no known Semitic root from which they can be derived; cf. Nöldeke, *ZDMG*, xl. p. 737 (against Delitzsch, *Prolegomena*, p. 95), and Fränkel, *Fremdwörter*, p. 99. It follows

<sup>1</sup> On Jer. 46<sup>4</sup>, *ZATW*, viii. p. 191, "Die Bedeutung 'Pferd' für פָּרֶשׁ ist nicht hinlänglich gesichert."



Aramaic loan-word. Had the Hebrew formed a word for *horseman* from פָּרֶשׁ *horse*, it would doubtless have been, like Arabic فارس, of the form קַמֵּל.

That the literal meaning of פָּרֶשׁ in the text of the Old Testament is everywhere *horse*, a brief survey of the usage will, I think, conclusively show.

פָּרֶשׁ occurs in the singular three times, in each case with unmistakable meaning *horse*. Ez. 26<sup>10</sup>: מִקּוֹל פָּרֶשׁ וְגִלְגָּל וּרְכָב: תִּרְעַשְׁנָה חֹמֹתֶיךָ, *Thy walls shall shake with the thunder of steed and wheel and chariot*, that is, with the clatter (and snorting and neighing?) of horses, the rattle of wheels, and the clang of chariot metal; cf. Jer. 47<sup>8</sup> 8<sup>16</sup> 2 K. 7<sup>6</sup>. Cornill's excision of פָּרֶשׁ וְגִלְגָּל is not merely unwarranted, but detracts materially from the force of the original.<sup>3</sup> It is the same stock rhetorical phrase that we have in Jer. 4<sup>29</sup>: מִקּוֹל פָּרֶשׁ וְרֶמָּה קֶשֶׁת בְּרַחַת כָּל הַעִיר, where in spite of the absence of the preposition before רֶמָּה קֶשֶׁת, this last is better construed as coördinate with the entire phrase מִקּוֹל פָּרֶשׁ, rather than as dependent on the word קוֹל, for מִקּוֹל רֶמָּה קֶשֶׁת would give no very good sense. The correct interpretation is, *All the land* (reading with the Greek הָאֵרֶץ for הָעִיר) *is in flight before* (a) *the sound of the war-horse and* (b) *the bowman's dart*. Lastly, the singular פָּרֶשׁ occurs in Nah. 3<sup>3</sup>, where פָּרֶשׁ מַעֲלָה, when restored to its proper place, is parallel to כּוֹס דָּהֵר and is correctly interpreted *rearing steed*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> According to Cornill (*Ezechiel*, p. 340 f.), besides disturbing the parallelism, the words פָּרֶשׁ וְגִלְגָּל "sind auch sachlich anstössig; die קוֹל geht nicht von den Reitern aus, sondern von den Wagen." So Cornill excludes the words because on the interpretation 'Reiter' they yield no satisfactory sense, and then Schwally (*l.c.*) disallows the meaning 'Pferd' because the integrity of this passage has been questioned by Cornill.

<sup>4</sup> דָּהֵר, both here and in Jud. 5<sup>22</sup>, is not to gallop, but to fall heels over head. The original of Nah. 3<sup>2-3</sup> is as follows:

וּרְעַשׂ אֹפֶן	קוֹל שׁוֹט
וּכּוֹס דָּהֵר	פָּרֶשׁ מַעֲלָה
מִרְקָדָה	וּמִרְכָּבָה
וּבִרְקַח חֲנִית	וּלְהִב חֶרֶב
וּכְבֹּד פָּנָיו	וּרֵב חֲלָל
לְנוֹיָה	וְאֵין קֶצֶה

The plural **פרשים** is used in twofold fashion :

(1) With primary sense, as a simple distributive or collective plural of **פרש** = *horses*. So 1 S. 8<sup>11</sup>: *The king whom the children of Israel choose shall take their sons and set them upon his chariot (במרכבתו), and upon his horses (בפרשיו), and others of them shall run before his chariot*; the reference here is to the personal equipage and retinue of the king. 1 K. 5<sup>6</sup> (= 2 Chron. 9<sup>25</sup>): *Solomon had four thousand (read so with the Chronicler for M's erroneous forty thousand) head of horses for his chariots (למרכבו; מרכב is good old Hebrew nomen generis, of which מרכבה is nomen unitatis) and twelve thousand cavalry-horses (פרשים)*. 1 K. 10<sup>26</sup> (= 2 Chron. 1<sup>14</sup>): *Solomon collected chariotry and cavalry (רכב ופרשים, see below), and he had fourteen hundred chariots (רכב) and twelve thousand cavalry-horses (פרשים)*. This passage harmonizes very well with the one just referred to, 1 K. 5<sup>6</sup>, and would seem to establish the meaning of **ארוה** as *head* and not *span*; four thousand is just about the requisite number of horses for the maintenance of an efficient force of fourteen hundred chariots:  $4000 \div 1400 = 2\frac{2}{7}$ . The Chronicler misread **ומרכבות** for **למרכבו** of 1 K. 5<sup>6</sup>, where nothing is said of the number of Solomon's chariots.<sup>5</sup>

*The crack of the lash, and the thunder of wheels !  
Rearing steed, and tumbling horse,  
And bounding chariot !*

*And gleam of sword, and flash of spear,  
And host of bleeding, and mass of corpses,  
And no end to the bodies of the dead !*

**דדהר** of Jud. 5<sup>22</sup> is *nomen vicis* = a somersault. **הָלַם עֶקֶב** is, of course, *kick*.

עֶקֶב סוֹם  
אֲבִירָיו

אוֹ הָלָמוּ  
מִדְּהָרוֹת דְּהָרוֹת

*Then (in the torrents of the Kishon) the horses' heels made havoc,  
As over and over rolled his men.*

I hope to return to the subject of the root **דָּהַר** in another place.

<sup>5</sup> The comparison of the incorrect **ומרכבות** of Chronicles with the correct **למרכבו** of Kings is sufficient to show that 2 Chron. 9<sup>25</sup> is derived from 1 K. 5<sup>6</sup>, and is not a later doublet of 2 Chron. 1<sup>14</sup>, on the basis of which doublet in turn, 1 K. 5<sup>6</sup> was inserted in the Book of Kings (as Kittel). Only, the

1 K. 20<sup>20</sup>: Ben-Hadad, the king of Aram, escapes *because of his chariot- and cavalry-horses* (עַל סוּם וּפָרָשִׁים); סוּם and פָּרָשִׁים must be given the same construction if we abide by the text.<sup>6</sup> Observe that the genus is סוּם (singular), but פָּרָשִׁים (plural). Ez. 27<sup>14</sup>: The Tyrians buy from Togarmah סוּסִים וּפָרָשִׁים וּפָרָדִים (chariot-) *horses and riding-horses and (pack-) mules*. Ez. 38<sup>4</sup>: סוּסִים וּפָרָשִׁים *chariot-horses and cavalry-horses*. Hos. 17: *I will not deliver them with bow and with sword and with battle, with chariot-horses and with cavalry-horses* (בְּסוּסִים וּבְפָרָשִׁים). With the same meaning סוּסִים and פָּרָשִׁים are coupled in Joel 2<sup>4</sup> Hab. 1<sup>8</sup> and Jer. 46<sup>4</sup>: אָסְרוּ הַסּוּסִים וְעַל הַפָּרָשִׁים, of course, *Harness the (chariot-) horses and mount the (cavalry-) steeds!* the entire verse refers to preparations *in situ*, and *Get up, ye "horsemen"!* would be קוּמוּ. Several passages, owing to the fragmentary and to some extent corrupt condition of the context, are exceedingly difficult of interpretation. Yet such as it is, the context leaves no doubt as to the meaning of פָּרָשִׁים. Is. 28<sup>28</sup>: The sensible man *has a care to* (cf. هَمَّ) *the wheel of his wagon, and his riding-horses are not injured in the hoof* (read יִדְקֶן); the original of the preceding part of the verse was probably to the effect that *he does not overwork his threshing-animals* (אִישׁ יְדוּשָׁנוּ הַשּׂוֹר יְדוּשֵׁן?); לֶחֶם יוֹדֵק would then be a glossator's erroneous caption. Is. 21<sup>6f</sup>: *For thus said my lord unto me, "Go set the watchman, let him report what he sees; and if he descry one riding* (point רֹכֵב) *a צֶמֶד פָּרָשִׁים, or riding an ass, or riding a camel, let him give strict atten-*

number four thousand of 1 K. 5<sup>6</sup> will have been raised to *forty thousand* since the Chronicler employed that book, or in manuscripts which did not influence the text he used. Deliberate tampering with the text of the older historical books since their employment by the Chronicler can, of course, be shown elsewhere.

<sup>6</sup> Kittel's "[entkam] mit (einigen) Berittenen auf einem Wagenpferd" is no sort of a translation of עַל סוּם וּפָרָשִׁים. Benzinger thinks וּפָרָשִׁים was added by a reader who desired to save some cavalry-men besides the king. An apostate reader! Klostermann alters וּפָרָשִׁים to סוּם הוּא וּפָרָשִׁים. Burney holds that "פָּרָשִׁים must be thought to be loosely connected on to סוּם by the ך as forming a concomitant factor to the king's escape. . . . But the text would be greatly improved by the addition of עָמוּ after פָּרָשִׁים."

tion." And the lookout (read הָרֹאֶה for אַרְיָה) cried "Upon the watchtower (מִצְפֵּה cs.) of my lord I remained throughout the day, and at my post I stood all night long; and behold there came one riding a צֶמֶד פִּרְשִׁים, and he spoke and said, Fallen, fallen is Babylon, and all the statues of her gods are crashed to the ground!" — My dearly beloved, that (the above oracular parable) which I have heard from Jahweh Sebaoth, the God of Israel, I have told you. אִישׁ a man of v.<sup>9</sup> is a gloss (lacking in the Greek) correctly indicating that the vocalization of רֶכֶב is רִכָּב and not רֶכֶב, just as in 22<sup>6</sup> the vocalization רֶכֶב is indicated by means of the generic אָדָם people. That the correct vocalization in v.<sup>9</sup> is רִכָּב, and that only one rider is seen approaching, appears from the number of וַיֵּצֵן וַיֹּאמֶר, which must be referred to רֶכֶב as antecedent. And if this is the proper vocalization in v.<sup>9</sup>, it must be the same in v.<sup>7</sup>; a single courier is awaited with news of Babylon, who may come on horse-back, donkey-back, or camel-back. It follows that unless the reading be corrupt in both v.<sup>7</sup> and v.<sup>9</sup> (which there is no reason for supposing and, in view of 2 K. 9<sup>25</sup>, strong reason for denying), צֶמֶד פִּרְשִׁים is the designation of a single specimen of the genus פִּרְשִׁים; in other words, it is a compound like שְׂעִיר עִזִּים. The question thus narrowed down is not difficult to answer. צֶמֶד in this connection must be a *she*, and צֶמֶד פִּרְשִׁים a (riding-) *mare*. This gives us the only satisfactory explanation of the text of 2 K. 9<sup>25</sup>: כִּי זָכַר אֲנִי וְאַתָּה אֶת רֶכְבִּים צֶמֶדִים אַחֲרֵי אֲחָאב אָבִיו וַיְהוּה וְג' *For call to mind myself and thyself riding mare-back behind Ahab, his father, when Jahweh etc.* It is, of course, not to be imagined that the sex of the animal is consciously emphasized in either of these passages; the Arab speaks of 'his mare' as we speak of a 'horse.' Is. 22<sup>6</sup>: בָּרֶכֶב אָדָם פִּרְשִׁים; as pointed out above, אָדָם is a gloss indicating the vocalization רִכָּב, which, if the text be unimpaired, is quite correct; רֶכֶב פִּרְשִׁים would be *riders* (collective, 'Reiterei') of horses; cf. 2 K. 7<sup>14</sup>, שְׁנֵי רֶכֶב כּוּסִים, *two horsemen*. But perhaps we should read רֶכֶב וּפִרְשִׁים; see the following verse.

(2) The generic פִּרְשִׁים *horses* is used tropically as the technical term for *cavalry*, just as the generic רֶכֶב *chariots*

is used for *chariotry*, and the generic סוס *horse* for the entire *mounted force*, and precisely as in English we speak of 'horse and foot.' סוס is the name of the animal as such; employed as a riding-horse, he becomes פָּרָשׁ. Accordingly, the two kinds of סוס 'horse' are סוס רֶכֶב *chariot-horse* and פָּרָשִׁים *cavalry*, Ex. 14<sup>9</sup>; no writer in his senses would speak of a mounted force as consisting of *chariot-horses and cavalry-men*, and if סוס רֶכֶב be tropical for *chariotry*, why not פָּרָשִׁים tropical for *cavalry*? Ex. 14<sup>23</sup>: Pharaoh's סוס consists of רֶכֶב וּפָרָשָׁיו *his chariotry and his cavalry*. So, in spite of the construction, we must interpret in the editorial verse 15<sup>19</sup>. Observe also the parallelism in Is. 31<sup>1</sup>: on the one side סוּסִים, on the other רֶכֶב and פָּרָשִׁים. In Ez. 26<sup>7</sup> it is difficult to determine whether we should render *with chariot-horses and chariots and cavalry-horses*, or, pleonastically, *with horse and with chariotry and with cavalry*. 1 S. 13<sup>5</sup>: the Philistines fight against Israel with *thirty thousand chariotry and six thousand cavalry*; as in the one case the unit is the *chariot*, so in the other it is the *horse*. 2 S. 8<sup>4</sup> (= 1 Chron. 18<sup>4</sup>): *And David took from him one thousand chariotry and seven thousand cavalry* (read so, with the Chronicler and the Greek, to make the latter half of the verse intelligible) *and twenty thousand infantry, and David demolished<sup>7</sup> all the chariots but one hundred, which he retained*. In 2 S. 10<sup>18</sup> we must read with the Chronicler (1 Chron. 19<sup>18</sup>), *David slew of Aram seven thousand chariotry* (here of course = *charioteers*) *and forty thousand foot*; the number *forty thousand* of itself favors the Chronicler's text, and the infantry must in any event be accounted for. פָּרָשִׁים = *cavalry* (but not *horsemen*): coupled with רֶכֶב, Gen. 50<sup>9</sup> Ex. 14<sup>17</sup>. 18. 26. 28 Josh. 24<sup>6</sup> 1 K. 15 9<sup>19</sup> = 2 Chron. 8<sup>6</sup> 1 K. 9<sup>22</sup> = 2 Chron. 8<sup>9</sup> 2 K. 21<sup>12</sup> 13<sup>7</sup>. 14 18<sup>24</sup> = Is. 36<sup>9</sup> Is. 22<sup>7</sup> Dan. 11<sup>40</sup> (chariots, horse, and ships), 1 Chron. 19<sup>6</sup> 2 Chron. 12<sup>8</sup> 16<sup>8</sup>; without רֶכֶב, Ezra 8<sup>22</sup> Neh. 2<sup>9</sup>. Of course the word is the same in all these passages. But אֲבִי רֶכֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפָרָשָׁיו of 2 K. 21<sup>12</sup> and 13<sup>14</sup> establishes the point that פָּרָשִׁים in these

<sup>7</sup> On עָקַר cf. Neo-Hebrew and Aramaic; it cannot here mean *to hough*, for רֶכֶב is never the animal.



connections is a merely formal plural with secondary, collective sense: *My father, my father, the chariots (or chariot) of Israel and the horsemen thereof!* spoken of Elijah and of Elisha, is absurd; *the chariotry of Israel and the cavalry thereof*, unexceptionable.

The distinction which, in reducing the language to terms of our own thought, we are forced to draw between פרשים in its primary sense of *riding-horses* and in its secondary sense of *cavalry*, did not occur to the ancient writer, so that in particular cases (such as, e.g., 1 K. 10<sup>26a</sup>) it is not easy to determine whether the rendering should be the one or the other. However, that פרשים was never used by the writers of the Old Testament with conscious reference to the horse-men, appears certain from the positive evidence of 2 S. 1<sup>6</sup>: the writer permits himself indeed to speak of the *charioteers* as הרכב, but the *cavalry-men* as distinguished from the 'horse' are בעלי הפרשים! The phrase is thoroughly idiomatic, and there is not the slightest ground for dropping בעלי, as do Wellhausen, Driver, H. P. Smith, and Nowack,<sup>8</sup> except the mistaken one that פרשים means *horsemen*; the Greek οἱ ἡνιπρχαὶ represents our Hebrew, otherwise it would have ἡνιπρῆς, only it mistranslated בעלי *commanders* instead of *men of*. Nor is it easy to see how the word בעלי could have crept into the text, whether on Wellhausen's improbable theory or in any other manner; for it runs directly counter to the traditional view of the meaning of פרשים; it is Hebrew against Aramaic.

The only Old Testament passages which seem to militate against the view above set forth are Ez. 23<sup>6, 12</sup>: פרשים רכבי סוסים in both verses. That there is something wrong with these passages appears at a glance. If פרש ever did mean *horseman* in Hebrew, it is not in the least likely that Ezekiel would have felt called upon to so inform his hearers. This is not a case of 'acervation of terms,' but of bald definition. One or the other of the two terms must be an interpolation; and in view of the parallel clauses of the context and the

<sup>8</sup> So also Budde in *SBOT*; in the later *KHC* he inclines to read בעלי סוסים.

phraseology of v.<sup>23</sup> and 38<sup>15</sup>, we cannot avoid the conclusion that the interpolation is פָּרָשִׁים. It is not disputed that the interpolator understood פָּרָשִׁים as meaning *horsemen*. But what with פָּרָשִׁים *cavalry* on the one hand, and Aramaic פָּרְשָׂא *horseman* on the other, the blunder is not to be wondered at.

There remains the question as to the form of the word פָּרָשׁ and the proper vocalization of the plural. Is the traditional vocalization correct, and have we here an animal-name of the form קָפָל, such as אֵיָה *hawk*, אֵיָל *hart*, רֵיָה *kite*? In view of the Arabic فَرس *horse*, on the one side, and the Aramaic פָּרְשָׂא *horseman* on the other, we must conclude that the Hebrew word is of the form קָפָל, and the traditional vocalization of the plural an error due to the influence of the Aramaic. The plural will therefore be פָּרָשִׁים.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The construct singular, if we had occasion for it, would naturally be פָּרָשׁ. For the rest, that the Masoretic pointing וְנִלְגַּל of Ez. 26<sup>10</sup> intends the construct state (Ewald<sup>8</sup>, § 339 *a*; Olshausen, § 183 *a*; Stade, § 217 *a*; Ges.-Kautzsch, §§ 84 *b*, 130 *b*; König, *Syntax*, p. 420) is extremely doubtful; cf. Böttcher, i. p. 304, and especially p. 525.